DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 216 847 RC 013 410

AUTHOR Mason, James A.
TITLE Uncertain Outposts: The Future of Camping and the Challenge of Its Past. An Occasional Paper.
INSTITUTION Fund for Advancement of Camping, Chicago, IL.
SPONS AGENCY Lingle (Bowman C.) Testamentary Trust, Chicago, IL.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 17p.
AVAILABLE FROM American Camping Assoc. Publications Service, Bradford Woods, Martinsville, IN 46151 ($1.00 plus shipping and handling).
JOURNAL CIT Camping Magazine; Sep-Oct 1978

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Camping; Experiential Learning; *Futures (of Society); *History; *Outdoor Education; Recreation; Rural Areas; Social Environment; *Social Responsibility; Urbanization; Values
IDENTIFIERS Isolation (Geographic)

ABSTRACT

Drawing from histories of communal encampments, organized camps and outposts found their first growth in the Centennial years of U.S. history. Nineteenth-century America and the solitary camps of wilderness pilgrams also shared a kinship in a search for another course than that marked by the prevailing customs and conventions of urban life and institutions. Their beginnings, like the rural intentional communities and isolated hunters' camps of the same era, lay hidden beneath the more conspicuous flourishing of America's Guilded Age and were overshadowed by the events of a transitional period of history. Today, while America's outposts of lake and forest learning and recreation have multiplied beyond belief, they are still but partially known and explored features of the nation's educational enterprise. Social tasks of camps, for the century ahead, are much like that of the Centennial era camps: to seek and sustain alternatives in community and vision; to reveal the connections of past and present; to support the linkages of cities and nature; to safeguard the diversity and humanity of life; and to open passages to a renewal of purposes and responsibilities, for men and women and their institutions. (Author/AH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED216847

UNCERTAIN OUTPOSTS:

The Future of Camping and the Challenge of Its Past

James A. Mason

An Occasional Paper issued by the Fund for Advancement of Camping

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Thomas J Curtin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

RC013410

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

About the author

James A. Mason was born in Minnesota in 1928; he was graduated from St. Olaf College and did graduate work at the University of Minnesota and the Union Theological Seminary in New York. Most summers since 1945 have been spent in camps, in the mountains of Colorado, in northern Minnesota, and near Chicago. Camp life was so much to his liking that he married a camp counselor in 1951. Mr. and Mrs. Mason and their four children have spent most of their lives in the camp environment.

Group work, social research, and planning filled the non-summer decade of 1952-62, in Minneapolis, New York City, and Chicago. From 1963-75 Mason was Director of Pleasant Valley Farm, the year-round camp of the Community Renewal Society. The society and the New World Foundation then provided support for a two-year period of research in camping and environmental education. It was during this period this paper had its origin.

In 1977 Mason became director of Camp Wilder, a 980-acre campsite near Marine-on-St. Croix, Minnesota. Since 1957 Camp Wilder has provided opportunities for day camps, outings, retreats and workshops, family camps, field trips, and other outdoor activities conducted by St. Paul area educational, health, and social agencies. This year-round camp is owned and operated by the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation of St. Paul.

Mason is a thoughtful, scholarly, and well-informed camp director who, after immersing himself in the camp environment for twenty years, removed himself from it for a significant period of research, contemplation, and evaluation. In **Uncertain Outposts: the Future of Camping and the Challenge of Its Past,** he draws on his practical experience and scholarly talents to state his own conclusions about the past and present purposes of camping.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

The publication of this monograph by the Fund for Advancement of Camping is designed to bring innovative writings in the organized camping and outdoor experience field to the attention of professionals in those fields, universities, libraries, individuals, and students. In a continuing series of such Occasional Papers, the Fund for Advancement of Camping will seek to:

Provide exposure to those ideas, research data, and other types of camp-related writings that normally would not be published in journals of the organized camping movement.

Provide a means by which those in the broad field of organized camping may improve their personal effectiveness by presentation of stimulating ideas for their professional development.

The Fund for Advancement of Camping is a nonprofit research, development, and education organization that is working for those who believe that people need the refreshment and renewal of outdoor experiences to maintain perspective in an urbanized society. Its support comes from voluntary contributions of those who are committed to its goal of serving as the innovative, experimental, cutting edge of camping and outdoor experience. If you would like to know more about its work, please contact: Fund for Advancement of Camping, 19 South LaSalle Street Suite 1126, Chicago, Illinois 60603. Telephone 312/332-0827.

Reprints of this monograph are available from the American Camping Association Publications Service, Bradford Woods, Martinsville, Indiana 46151 at a cost of one dollar per copy.

This publication was made possible by a grant from the Bowman C. Lingle Testamentary Trust.

Copyright © 1978
by
Fund for Advancement of Camping

In a rare and festive symbol of unison among the independent practitioners of the camping enterprise, hundreds of summer youth camps around the United States joined in lighting campfires on the evening of July 4, 1976, in a single "simultaneous salute" to the nation's Bicentennial and to organized camping's own centenary and beginnings in the 1870s. From the camp country of Maine's Sebago Lake and the North Carolina Blue Ridge to the Coast Range camps of metropolitan California, old time songs and stories and fire-lit ceremonials of the "National Campfire" added a low-keyed footnote to the fireworks, cannon salutes, fleets of tall ships, and community picnics and festivals of that Sunday of old fashioned optimism and good times for many Americans.

At the threshold of its new American century, camping's celebration was of a rich and colorful past, of a present-day array of outdoor program undreamed of by camping's founders, and of a bounty of good feeling that many thousands of camp people have held for their happy seasons in the woods and mountains and by the sea. Of the future, however, the reflections of that summer evening were much less certain. Some camp leaders in 1976 echoed the sentiments of the Bicentennial and spoke of camping's role in reaffirming the old beliefs: responsibility and loyalty, integrity and a respect for the nation and its people and land, against the erosion of traditional values by the currents of change and disbelief. Others looked to camping as a nurturing ground for a new life-style: of simplicity, naturalness, and deepened social and spiritual awareness, emerging with the post-Vietnam War era. But for the most part, attention was given to the past and present of camping, not to its clouded future.

Today, uncertainty is more than a lingering symptom of the social and political disenchantments that followed the public events of the 1960s and early 1970s; it has become one of the hallmarks of contemporary life in the United States. For many, probably even for most Americans, visions of the future are no longer brightened with a sense of a utopian tomorrow, or even with a belief in the inevitability of social improvement. Instead, views of the decades ahead tend to be overshadowed by a fear of catastrophe or cultural collapse, with a sense of rapidly diminishing resources and unmanageable cities and societies, and with a distrust in the abilities of governments and technologies to cope with the ever-enlarging crises of world society. In such a context, it is not a wonder that most of organized camping, like most other social and educational institutions of these drifting, opening years of the third American century, seems at a loss to know its destination. Present-day camping talks of goals and objectives, professional standards, organizational skills, cost-effectiveness, and management efficiency; its programs often soar with imagination and innovation; and its craft is increasingly competent, and accountable to the mainstream of public order and opinion. But like its times, the larger purpose and course of camping tend to be vague and undetermined, obscured beneath overlays of sentiment, nostalgia, and a new preoccupation with the immediacy of heightened awareness, social intimacy, and temporary challenge, replacing all but a few traces of the strong social consciousness that once played an important influence in the making of camping program.

A VIEW FROM THE PAST

In contrast to the declining importance of camping's social purpose in recent years, earlier periods of organized camp life were well marked with enthusiastic pronouncements of camping's contribution to the shaping of future society. For example, in the decade following World War II, one of camping's most creative and energetic periods, camp people looked to a new emphasis on decentralized program and small group outdoor living, and to school camps, teenage and young adult work camps, interracial camping, farm camps, youth hostel and trip camping, and family camps, as both the training ground and the promise of a new democratic order.

A quarter of a century earlier, organized camping described itself as a special institution of American education, uniquely equipped for the preparation of people from all walks of life for full, responsible citizenship in an industrial society. And earlier, at the turn of the century, camping leaders looked to their outdoor settings and programs as the revitalization of society through a return of urban youngsters to nature, physical work and activity, and the practice of social responsibility. Through every period of camping's history, from the 1970s, when a summer of camping and trail-building work in the eastern mountains was first advocated for the physical and civic fitness of American youth, to the 1940s and 1950s, when the promise of camping in every school system seemed to its outdoor education proponents to be a lively means of nurturing democracy at its roots, a continuing strand of camping purpose saw camp life as a means toward social renewal and change, as well as an occasion for personal growth and learning.

Social Purpose in Early Camps

Looking to the larger diversity of nineteenth century institutional sources of present-day camps and outdoor centers, it can be seen how much of camping's varied beginnings were born of a search for educational and social alternatives and reforms as a response to social needs. Among the earliest sources in the United States were educational innovations like New England's Round Hill School or Thompson's Island, and other farm schools and manual labor academies of the first half of the century—the precursors of modern farm camps, work camps, and outdoor education centers—which sought reform in both schooling and society through an education that mingled work and experience with intellectual and moral training. A later source, the Chautauqua assemblies, which evolved out of the summer camp meetings of the post Civil War period and numbered in the several hundreds by 1900, looked to themselves not only as vacation encampments of church folk in woodland groves and gingerbread tabernacles, but as people's universities and model

popular democracies, even as model cities for an emerging urban age. More strongly committed to alternative community education, and nearly as influential as the Chautauquas in the shaping of outdoor residential conference and educational centers in the United States and Canada, were the Scandinavian folk schools, which were first initiated in rural North America by Danish immigrants before 1880.

Even the field study centers and outdoor encampments of academics that also appeared during the last decades of the nineteenth century, like Louis Agassiz' short-lived summer school on Penikese Island in Buzzard's Bay, or Thomas Davidson's camp of philosophy at Glenmore in the Adirondacks; or the annual summer encampments of students and graduates of the Castine Normal School in Maine in the late 1870s, were much more than summer colonies of intellectuals; they were hailed as humanistic alternatives to the stuffy formalities of the Gilded Age, comprising teachers and students, men and women, participating equally and democratically in informal outdoor living and study.

Urbanism and the Growth of Youth Camps

The original youth camps, too, were well marked with a sense of social purpose and direction, typically phrased as a response to what were seen to be the ills of urbanism and the growth of cities. According to the advocates of camps and camping in the late nineteenth century, the youth of cities were not only beset by the grime and dirt of unkempt streets, the distractions of city clatter, and the constant flow and change of metropolitan life, they were corrupted by the artificiality and pretensions of urban social and educational customs, and, most of all, were divorced from traditional sources of social apprenticeship, such as the experience of doing manual work and using manual tools and skills, participating in the care and maintenance of one's own household and community, living intimately with nature, and coping with the hazards and hardships of life in the open.

Educators shared elements of this diagnosis. Innovations such as nature study, classroom arts and crafts, manual training, school farms and gardens, or excursions and school journeys, were interpreted as means of integrating experience with learning and opening schools to the lessons of nature. But to many camp people, who proposed a more radical break with the city and school, such devices were not much more than partial imitations of "nature and the farm that made the men" in preindustrial United States. It was far better to actually live with nature, to contend with the elements, and to create and sustain a human community in the midst of woods and lakes.

To Winthrop Talbot, a director of an encampment for boys on New Hampshire's Squam Lake from the 1890s into the early 1900s, and a representative early spokesman of organized camping's social concerns, the modern city was a "tyranny" against which an "ever-growing revolt" found expression in summer camping. One effect of the city's tyranny, he said, was the dulling of perceptions and the deterioration of health and fitness; another, the promotion of city-biased stereotypes of country people and country experience; another, the city's stratification of social and economic life. In contrast, Talbot saw camp life acquainting youth, not with the artificial hierarchy of tasks that characterized urban institutions, but with the fundamentals of work and the basic skills of farmers, woodsmen, and other outdoor laborers. Camps offered an alternative to the "prolonged idleness of summer," and they produced health and fitness that would endure through the winter months for youth "penned up amid tenement walls, in hot streets, or even loafing on hotel piazzas." But camping's most valuable and contrasting feature, and the keystone of its social purpose, was its democracy, where all youth, whether "the embryo aristocrat, the budding tough, or the crude, well-meaning boy" were equals in work, play, and social responsibility.

The modern city was a tyranny against which an ever-growing revolt found expression in summer camping.

A person of wide interests and concerns, with an aptitude for social invention, Winthrop Talbot of Camp Asquam was not untypical of the first generation of youth camp creators and leaders. Like his colleagues, his ties were strongly those of Yankee social responsibility and service, and his kinship, like that of the early camping movement, was with the liberal institutional reform crusade that had emerged in response to the accelerated growth of industrial cities during the last decades of the nineteenth century. For Talbot, camping was but one episode in a larger career of health and educational activity that ranged from his early work in medical education and public health in Boston to a later career in industrial relations, workers' health, and, especially, immigrant workers' education and adult literacy. In camping, he was one of the first advocates of public school camps; with Ernest Balch and George Hinckley, Talbot was among the original innovators of winter camps; and, illustrating organized camping's early connections with the summer assemblies and the outdoor art and nature schools, he was an early promoter of camps for adults, which he saw as having purposes and values similar to camps for young people.

In camping history, Winthrop Talbot is best remembered for his leadership in the formative years of the camping movement, including the organization of the first conference on camping held in the United States—a conference that found testimonials to camping's social purpose to be its common denominator. The conference on summer camps that was assembled in Boston by Talbot on behalf of the General Alliance of Workers with Boys in 1903 was far from a rendezvous of Maine woodsmen and Adirondack guides, swapping tales and skills, as the theme of camps and camping may have suggested to an outsider of that period. Drawing from many of the several hundred camps that were then in operation, the assembly was a slice of the Yankee establishment—an urbane cross section of moderation in educational and social reform circles. Ancient caretakers of culture and lights of Boston well-doing were there, like Robert Treat Paine, president of the American Peace Society, asking for camps for adult workingmen; the writer and reformer, Edward Everett Hale, stating that few subjects in the area of education and municipal services were "of more importance than that of summer camps"; and 80-year-old Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the onetime abolitionist and celebrated leader

of black troops during the Civil War, who presided over the meetings. Gathered, too, were university people, clergymen, physicians and health workers, and a new generation of educators and youth workers, speaking of the ties of camping with other institutional innovations of the period, such as settlement houses, vacation schools, playgrounds and municipal recreation, school gardens, adult-inspired youth organizations, institutional churches, and progressive education. For the conferees, camping was more than a recreational device or a new addition to the furnishings of education. Most of all, it was a corrective to the ills of cities and a carrier of the values of industry, vigor, and self-reliance that were felt to have been neglected in the new American age. Appropriately, the **Boston Globe** headlined its coverage of the 1903 conference, "Open Air Gospel Advocated for Young and Old," underlining the fervor of the assembly on behalf of this outdoor invention of scarcely two decades of practice, that was already being celebrated as a distinctive vehicle for the lively training of a new American citizenry.

Camps as Alternatives

For some observers of the "outdoor gospel," the conference marked the organizational beginnings of the camping movement; and for others, it was a stride toward the standardization of the outdoor institution. But for still others, recalling the pioneering experiences of the first summer camps along the New Hampshire lakes, the growing popularity of organized camp life was a sure sign of camping becoming citified and civilized—the very qualities, according to its enthusiasts, that camps were formed to resist. Even from the outset of camps, such a current of self-criticism appeared, judging camping for its temptations to resort-like services and accommodations; its tendency to take the form of city parks and playgrounds, outdoor churches and schools; and its attraction to the latest recreational fads and equipment—any direction, in other words, that led camp life astray from its meaning and purpose as an experience of work, play, and reflection in natural surroundings, unencumbered by the trappings of man-made environments. Edgar M. Robinson, the first International Secretary of Boys' Work for the YMCA, wrote in 1902 that "the danger that threatens the camp of today is not that it will be too wild or too savage in its character, but that it will not be wild or savage enough. When the spirit of 'roughing it' has been extracted from the camp, the juice of the thing is pretty well gone." And for George Hinckley, one of New England's first practitioners of camping-out with needy youth, the growth and elaboration of summer camps in the early 1900s was a sure sign that "real camping" was passing; "the woods are calling to boys to enjoy the test and development of primitive ways of living"; he wrote, but "the boys are not responding because an easier—even a luxurious—substitute is offered."

While the "open-air gospel" and its theory of camping's alternative to urban life took many forms, its purest expression, for many of its evangelists, was a sojourn in the wilderness, with most of the paraphernalia of affluence left far behind. Such a sojourn, said the critics of the newer and more elaborate camps, was camping at its best—its most enduring contrast to the life of cities and the issues of society; its course to self-understanding; and its best preparation for coping with the problems of the future. To the journalist-adventurer, Robert Dunn, looking back to his days as one of Winthrop Talbot's campers in

the early 1890s, "the soul of those summers" at Camp Asquam was its life beyond the domesticated places—"the mountains we climbed, the first twilights of boyhood on the trail in the woods." And 50 years later, what he recorded of those seasons with Talbot on Squam Lake was his initiation to the wilderness—the first climb onto Mount Chocorua's bare rock dome overlooking the New Hampshire lake country, where Dunn felt "the human world far below to be unreal and trivial," and himself as "the sole being on earth as alive as its woods and ridges . . . apart from self or man."

Today, like Dunn's Chocorua musings of years ago, the soul of camping's summer is still the venture beyond the boundaries of day-to-day experience, the outlooks of self-discovery, and the moments of insight and recognition. And the current of criticism of camping's tendency to overcrowd such ventures and moments with increasingly more elaborate organization and procedures, or with the gear and apparatus of fashion, affluence, and program fads, is still a strong one. But where the difference lies is in the larger context: in the meaning a Winthrop Talbot would give to his Asquam community; in that search for alternatives; and the intention of change and social reform that filled the air of early camping's debates and convocations.

A PERSPECTIVE OF THE PRESENT

Today, the trek to the wilds and rural hinterlands in pursuit of a few days or weeks of new or contrasting experience continues to produce a diversity of settings and programs designed for learning and growth in the out-of-doors—some, new in form and idea; others, following the pattern of camping's original innovations. Alongside the best known and most formidable of the encampments, the summer camps for youth, are rural conference centers, folk schools, and retreat houses; school camps and residential environmental education centers; camps for families and older adults; growth centers and live-in workshops in rural or outdoor environments. In addition, there are camp meetings and assemblies; travel camps, excursions, and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

expeditions of educational intent; volunteer work camps; wilderness institutes and outdoor survival schools; and the likelihood of a dozen other categories and definitions of camp program settings. Today in the United States, established residential outdoor centers and programs probably number between nine and ten thousand, not including the many hundreds of versions of short-term "camping-out" activities of religious groups, universities, youth organizations, mental hospitals, and other institutions.

While lacking a single, encompassing definition, this mixed collection of outdoor programs, residential camps, and back-roads outposts suggests several characteristics that tend to be shared in common. One feature is that all represent voluntary, temporary retreats or departures from customary settlements and habitations. Another is the isolated, short-term group or community living situation in a rural or natural environment. And a third characteristic is their intentional design, with purposes tending to be expressed in terms of growth or change in the lives of participants, and only occasionally as change or renewal in society and its institutions.

Like passages between one established status or permanent settlement and another, outposts and encampments belong to the recesses and interstices of organized society; to the territories that lie between the institutions of work or formal schooling, and those of private leisure and recreation. Most of the settings are likely to be recognized under one or another version of organized camps and camping or some other category of informal education. But many are of evolving definition, or combine several descriptions of purpose, and are of more elusive classification. Like the California wilderness program calling itself a "non-camp camp"; the midwestern environmental education center that reports it is "more than just a camp, but a resource center for change"; or settings that are remindful of places like the Commonwealth Art Colony, a Maine coast outpost for teachers of art in the early years of the century, that described its setting as "not a camp, neither is it strictly a school, but a place where a number of people who have done things assemble to rest, to study, or to enjoy the unusual beauty and natural attraction of this place, with their friends, and to escape the crowds that throng the great summer resorts."

Departures from older camp patterns have moved toward greater individuality of settings.

Range of Camp Settings

The range, independence, and complexity of camp settings have not diminished in recent years, although there are abundant indications that many of the long-established institutes of summer, the traditional youth camps and the old-time summer conference centers, are in decline, both in number and popular image. The creation of new camps has also dropped sharply since the mid-1960s, in contrast to periods of rapid growth in the 1920s and again in the post-World War II era. Where new camps and centers have been started, or where the programs and orientation of older settings have been revised or redirected, there has been a tendency either toward specialization in content or constituents, or toward diversification of year-round services. In either case, the departures from older patterns have moved toward greater individuality of settings. Even the most recent additions to outpost life, the wilderness training institutes and programs that have flowered with considerable display, especially since 1970, have not conformed to a single mold, but have variously assumed the functions of environmental education endeavors, retreats, growth seminars, or summer camps, as integral to their back-country activities.

Enhanced by the relatively free form of camp life and by a low level of external controls and role definition, the originality, autonomy, and diversity of camps are probably best reflected in the varied range of agencies and interests that have been drawn to outdoor settings for the accomplishment of particular purposes. There are few educational settings that have thrived with the degree of favorable, almost unquestioned regard that camps have experienced during most of their history. Indeed, for many advocates of outpost life, the benefits of organized camps and camping have been viewed as inherent in camp environments themselves, with the principle task of leadership seen to be one of harnessing and utilizing camping's intrinsic values for the accomplishment of particular education objectives. Accordingly, the making of camps, whether by church, social agency, private individual, or any other party, has encompassed a great and varied range of invention, not infrequently improvised about the lingering assumption that simply "going to camp," whatever its content or character, offers unmatched rewards for both young and old.

A Change in the Public View

In more recent years, camps generally have been viewed more critically from outside as well as from within the camping institution. Youth camps, for example, no longer bear the reputation of earlier eras, including that of offering the most beneficial and attractive educational alternative for a young person's summer. For some agencies and families, mindful of reports of increasing costs, declining enrollments, health and safety shortcomings, and leadership and program inadequacies in some camp settings, sending a child to camp for a season might even be among the least favored of options, when weighed in the context of a growing assortment of community or family based summer activities. Organizations with long histories of investment in camping and outdoor programs—religious groups, community centers, youth agencies, and so on—have tended to find their camp involvements burdened not only with serious financial and management problems, but confronted by changed constituencies and new organizational and funding priorities. Some have responded by converting traditional summer youth camps into year-round programs involving many ages and interests; a few others, by turning to specialized tasks, such as environmental education, alternative delinquency or chemical dependency programs; and others, by selling their camps, or abandoning them to commercial uses or to minimum housekeeping and facility rental operations. The participation of government in camping programs has also been reviewed more critically, especially after the fumbling of the hurriedly planned,

mass application of traditional outdoor recreation and work camp formulas to the complexity of urban problems, witnessed in the earliest Job Corps camp experience and the camping ventures of the "cool summer" urban ghetto youth programs of the late 1960s.

During the past 10 to 15 years, a major criticism of camps and other outdoor programs has emphasized their detachment from significant social issues and their insulation from the full spectrum of society. With less than two of every 10 youth of camping age enrolled in camps each summer, and with an even smaller fraction of adults participating in camp and outdoor centers and programs, organized camping tends to foster the making of sanctuaries of privilege, dominated in leadership and participation by affluent white Americans, and oriented to certain social and economic class interests and involvements, not to the total composition of life and population in the United States. And while camps and outposts are free of many of the constraints and accountabilities known to other educational settings, and have the unique opportunity and capacity for innovation and new program development, much of the camping enterprise is inclined to linger behind the vanguard of educational experimentation, risk taking, and change; to be highly conventional with respect to both its own program and the larger culture; and to be withdrawn from controversy and full engagement with public issues.

The more familiar caricature of organized camping—which has tended to dominate the larger definition of camp and outpost experience, and has driven many outdoor educational programs in search of other identifications—has been that of a harmless play-world at the far periphery of experience; an oasis of good times, disconnected and without counterparts in society; an often valuable weening experience for children, and an opportunity for acting out new and different roles for adults and families, but mostly a happy recess from the troubles and routines of life. More recently, redrawn interpretations of this stereotype emphasize that while camps may indeed be sanctuaries, they are neither harmless nor peripheral, but bear policies and practices that are influential in the shaping of social, racial, and environmental attitudes, as well as of consequence to the mental and physical health and well-being of participants. The beneficial influences of camps are not native to their detached settings, but are created—just as they are also frustrated or destroyed—by the conscious acts of people interacting with one another and the larger environment. Whatever its setting, it is people who comprise the reality of camp life and community. It is they who determine its isolation or its involvement with society; who reflect the boundaries or bridges of class and culture; who mirror the diversities or the conformities of life; and who shape the gains or losses of a season at camp.

Although still in the background of camps and camping, the idea of the inherent virtues of outdoor living experience, and its expanded notion in the idea of the innocence of communities lived close to nature, have diminished in the face of social events that have determined the course and quality of living in recent years. For camps, the loss is fortunate; especially if they are to be viewed more critically and seriously, not simply as patches of vacation scenery and rustic simplicity, but as outposts of a troubled society, wholly capable of becoming sanctuaries of sanity and households of change for a people grown up with a fear of doomsday and the sparse spiritual harvest of a business civilization. But to do so, will mean that camps will need to look again to a renewal of social purpose, to refresh their memory of camping's earlier search for social relevance, and to review more closely the course they appear now to be taking into the third American century.

3

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A LOOK AHEAD

What, then, does the future hold for camps and camping? Where is the route that camping now seems to be following into the decades that lie ahead? What other courses might there be, and what other means can be found, in camping's search for meaning in the uncertainties of its new social environment?

There should be little question that camps can be highly useful and purposeful settings for meeting critical institutional and educational needs during the next several decades. The need for models of institutional change and accountability; for new kinds of encompassing educational settings and communities; for centers designed for the support of more humanized, simpler modes of life; for lively demonstrations of uncontrived human diversity, interacting in work and play; for temporary settlements of people, able to resist the invasions of exploitative society, and to explore social and personal disciplines needed for the enhancement and sustenance of the relations of people with one another and the earth—are all needs that camping's special history, traditional freedom, and potential openness and flexibility seem to uniquely fit. Yet there is a question whether camping can undo the long-standing fixtures and alignments that have tended to be its principal obstacles to change, in order to adapt its people, resources, and program structures to another set of needs and circumstances in the 1980s and beyond. There are hints of change; but there are also signs of rigidity and reluctance to assume the risks involved in making the necessary departures.

Looking ahead, then, and anticipating a fairly low level of intervention in the trends that have characterized the course of organized camping since the mid-1960s, one can hazard the following conjectures with respect to at least the next decade of camp life:

In contrast to its recent period of decline, which began in the mid-1960s and continued into the early 1970s, camping is likely to remain at about its current level, in terms of the overall number of camps and camp participants, at least in the immediate future. Looking ahead, a further drop in overall participation will probably take place during the 1980s, especially with an anticipated levelling off of specialized camps and outdoor program. More important, however, than the total number of camps and campers, will be a continued shift in types of outdoor program, particularly with the decline of so-called "traditional" camping and the increase in the number of camps emphasizing more specialized activities or catering to specialized constituencies.

Some of the reasons underlying the decrease of the old-line youth camps will probably include the following:

(1) A declining birthrate and decrease in the population of camping's long-standing age and social class constituency.

(2) The steadily increasing costs of camps, which will not be matched by public perceptions of camping's competence or effectiveness.

(3) A greater range of family and community-based alternatives to summer youth camps.

(4) An increase in short-term, specialized camps and outdoor program.

(5) An increased concern of parents with respect to the security and safety of children in camps or away from their home and neighborhood surroundings.

(6) The continued erosion of camping's public image, whether in the television and comic strip caricatures of "Camp Whinnie-haha" or "good ol' Camp Mo-skee-toe"; in accounts of assaults, scandals, and health and safety negligence in camps; or in the apparent aging and obsolescence of many camp sites, facilities, and programs.

(7) A general decline in popularity of more institutionalized leisure forms and activities in American life, and the increased demand for nontraditional, informal, relatively unstructured, shorter term, and less costly leisure events.

(8) The closing of camps due to increased costs or the inability to meet standards of regulatory and licensing agencies.

(9) The retirement from active camping roles of the generation of innovative influential camp leaders, who have been in leadership positions in the mainstream of recent camping history since the 1940s and 1950s.

Ironically, while reasons as these are likely to contribute to traditional camping's decline, the potential for camping services will increase, with the continued enlargement and greater flexibility of the leisure sphere of personal and family life, because of shortened work weeks, flexible work schedules, longer vacations for more workers, fluctuating employment, and year-round school scheduling. Camping's potential will also grow with an increased interest in camp experience as an extension of society's enlarging caretaking industry—in family service, mental health, child guidance, corrections, chemical dependency programs, day care, elderly care, special education, job training programs, and so on. While some of the older camps will be able to modify facilities, schedules, and planning and program habits in order to accommodate new kinds of year-round outdoor program services, much of this increased camping potential will probably not be served because many camping people will be unable or unwilling to make the necessary changes in established camp settings. At the same time, the increase in new camps developed to foster training or practice in a particular interest or skill, or to meet the needs of special constituencies, will be enhanced by the greater range of leisure time and inclinations in American life, and by the enlarged camping interests of caretaking services.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Specialized Camps

Camps featuring one or another skill or interest had beginnings around the turn of the century with programs catering primarily to adults; and since World War I—and especially during the last 20 years— have become an important part of youth camp history. Of late, camps with emphasis on tennis instruction, football, basketball, gymnastics, soccer, ice hockey, and other sports, or on art, music, science, dramatics, horsemanship, language study, baton twirling, wilderness travel and survival, and a wide miscellany of other skills and diversions, represent camping's most publicized sector of activity. The further growth and diversification of these settings—although many will be of fairly short-lived duration—can be anticipated for the immediate future, as can the increase in remedial and tutorial educational camps and programs serving special populations.

Camps and outdoor programs for adults will grow in number and variety during the next 10 years, particularly with programs for women, senior adults, management and employee training groups, and handicapped adults. Special interest camps for adults, such as health and fitness centers, new versions of the nineteenth century "summer schools of philosophy" and the art colonies of the early 1900s, wilderness training camps and workshops, adult sports camps, resident rural crafts centers and schools, and so on, are also likely to become more popular. Camping and residential outdoor programs with phsyically, emotionally, and mentally disabled persons will also be increasing during the next decade, especially in short-term outdoor adventure activity, and in settings patterned after the innovative Scandinavian health-sports center at Beitostolen, Norway, and other long-term, outdoor health-training programs.

Traditional camps are likely to continue to give more attention to currently popular camp specialties.

Influenced by these trends, traditional camps are likely to continue to give more attention to sports, risk-adventure activities, travel programs, and other currently popular camp specialties. Like the recent flourish of ecology programs, some of these activities will have brief lives, although in some settings they may eventually contribute to a more enduring enrichment and diversification of youth camping. Private and organizational camps, as well as church and social agency camping programs, are likely to move toward even greater sharing of facilities and camp seasons with agencies and groups serving special interests and populations—a trend of recent years that has contributed to an increase in multi-service outdoor settings in the camping field.

Diversification in Camping Services

While the growth of diversified and more flexible camp programs and settings, such as camps serving multi-age groups and multiple interests through various combinations of camping programs, conference and workshop events, therapeutic services, and educational alternatives, is a relatively recent development in camping, there are precedents in earlier camp history. Some of the multi-faceted summers of the Chautauqua assemblies were probably the earliest of the diversified settings, along with the "country vacation centers" of the turn-of-the-century settlement houses. But probably the closest forerunner to the modern multi-purpose center was the state 4-H camp at Jackson's Mill, West Virginia, where, under the imaginative leadership of William H. Kendrick in the 1920s, a summer camp for farm boys and girls became the household of winter vocational schools for young people—"Life Planning Institutes" they were called; folk school and conference center programs for adults; "Country Life Jubilees"; and local and regional community center functions held throughout the year.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, multi-faceted outdoor program centers, with a kinship to camps, as well as to folk schools and residential conference centers, and with a similarity to Jackson's Mill range of interests and services, began to assume prominence among outposts. Appearing during that period, places as diverse as Ghost Ranch in New Mexico, Holden Village in Washington, Pleasant Valley in Illinois, and the Quetico Centre in Ontario, and perhaps a dozen others, gradually contributed to the shaping of what is today a special outdoor setting. The growth of these centers, which are now represented by more than a handful of private camps and environmental centers, several wilderness programs, and many church and agency camps, is certain to continue through the next decade. For some church camping people, the diversified setting, with its relevance to many ages and needs, is already the model of future denominational camps—a judgment that is likely to be shared by an increasing representation of organizational sponsors of camps and outdoor centers, including even some of the national youth agencies.

The diversified setting tends to be more than a summer camp or conference center that affords space and facilities to outside agencies during other seasons of the year. Most typically, it is a year-round center, usually with its own set of programs and program staff, and with its own unique program style and character. With the management of diversified centers tending to rest in the hands of creative, independent leaders, the centers also tend to be highly individualistic and often erratic in their careers, just as they are inclined to escape strict definition. As these settings assume a more recognizable form during the period ahead, a certain amount of standardization can be anticipated, yet flexibility, experimentation, and change will be the principal features of the multi-purpose centers, at least for the next decade. While the centers will tend to remain outside of the mainstream, and will, in fact, represent an overall minority of camp and outdoor center activity, they will probably become one of the most important sources for change in outpost institutions.

Traditional Camps

Specialization and diversification, combined with a generally waning interest in traditional camping, will not mean that all standard youth camps will be struggling for survival during the next 10 years. On the contrary, many youth camps will prosper, not because of the addition of the latest program fads and fashions, but because they will be viewed as matching the interests of those parents, agencies, and communities who will be looking to camp experience as a stable,

protected setting for the rediscovery and reenforcement of "old values and beliefs" in the lives of young people. Camps with strong ties to several generations of family enrollment, especially, will be seen by many parents and agencies as anchors or moral alternatives in troubled times. Not unrelated to the decline of traditional institutions and sources of purpose and meaning in the lives of many affluent Americans, youth camps of all sorts, including those that have defined themselves principally as recreational programs, will feel greater pressure to perform as counseling resources for families, as well as youth.

Camps and outdoor programs sponsored and led by fundamentalist religious groups, right wing political organizations, and other conservative communities, who will emphasize the role of camps as a conservatory of values as well as a controlled setting for training and indoctrination, will increase. The growth and vitality of this articulate sector of camping will tend to have an influence on the larger camping movement, including the latter's organizational stance with respect to public issues and the role of government in camping. Indeed, it is quite likely that conservatism in religion, politics, and views of camping's purpose in society will become the dominant voice of organized camping in the immediate future. Reflecting a deeper rift in American society, a sharpening of the polarization that is already apparent in the field of camping is not at all unlikely, with one of its more positive impacts being a clarification of camping's social purpose and its potential contribution to social change.

With respect to governmental involvement in camping, a continuation and possible expansion of state and federal conservation work camp program, and the funding of camping and outdoor alternatives in corrections, chemical dependency treatment, and services to disabled persons, are likely. A broadening and diversification of camping activities sponsored under the auspices of state extension services are also likely. In general, however, public funding of camping is likely to become less available, especially for standard youth camping programs, and will probably fluctuate in accord with various measures of inner city youth "unrest" rather than with appraisals of the values of camp experience, or efforts of national camping leaders and organizations. Manifestations of significant youth or community discontent are certain to foster consideration of camping alternatives, as was the case in the 1930s and 1960s. Attention in the future, however, will be given to more specialized programs, such as sports camps, risk-adventure programs, conservation work camps, and so on, rather than to standard social agency camping.

The use of resident camps in outdoor or environmental education will probably not be increased, and may, in fact, be reduced, primarily because of rising costs and declining school interest, and the unwillingness of camps to subsidize the off-season use of their sites by schools. While a small number of camps and centers will continue to emphasize their environmental content in quite distinctive and creative ways, environmental education generally will tend to become increasingly formalized and institutionalized, and will probably continue to decline in camps and camping. With the anticipation of little intervention in the course of recent years, an enlargement of public funding of environmental education in costly residential settings is unlikely. In general, educational institutions will be turning more to informal, less structured, short-term outdoor experiences than to the more traditional "school camp" formats of outdoor education. Secondary schools, adult continuing education, and special education programs, in particular, will seek less traditional settings in which outdoor environmental experiences and adventure camping are combined with group interaction and human relations training.

The strict licensing of all camps, including travel and wilderness adventure programs, and retreat and conference centers, along with tougher health and safety regulations, and employment requirements, will become effective in all states during the next decade. In the area of camp sites and facilities, there will be a certain amount of innovation with respect to the use of alternative technologies in building design, energy systems, and waste disposal; but probably the most significant trend in camping's physical apparatus will be the continued closing down of facilities because of the inability to meet the upgraded standards of regulatory agencies or because of incompatible neighborhood development, lake degradation, and the small size and congestion of overbuilt and overused sites. Some alternatives that will be given attention are likely to include the development of sites shared by several programs, efforts to secure the public contribution of shared outdoor recreation and wildland sites, and use of undeveloped sites for small-group primitive camp programs, and the further development of "non-site" activity, such as mobile programs that utilize public sites or a regional network of hostels, or agency-based campgrounds. To facilitate non-site programs, more attention will be given to outdoor resource outfitting on the part of urban agencies seeking to maintain an interest in camping and outdoor programs. This would include the supply of travel vehicles, resource equipment and supplies, and resource program staff.

Financing of increasingly more costly camps and outpost programs will be the continuing, major problem of the next decade.

For most programs throughout the period, the financing of increasingly more costly camps and outpost programs will be the continuing, major problem. Fees will climb, and outside funding will be hard to find. Generally, public and private funding will follow the trend of camping, giving less attention to traditional camp activity and more interest to outdoor program projects with special populations, to some of the more diversified and experimental camps and centers, and to joint metropolitan agency camp planning and development endeavors. Some camps will be looking to non-program sources of supplemental income, such as outdoor recreation fees and rentals, or the sale of wood products or agricultural produce; and a few programs will seek to ease the burdens of increasing costs through changes in program structure and staffing, such as turning to more self-service, community-based program, or reducing the range of activities and program options.

In sum, the near future for camping, like its recent past, will be an uneasy one, often lean in resources and imagination, and sparse and uncertain in its vision of the future. But the next years of camping will not necessarily be those of a dying institution. Purposeful instances of innovation, change, and vitality, combined with gradual changes in camp leadership and alignments, and a somewhat tougher look at camping's weaknesses and limitations, will certainly be present, and will hopefully contribute to subtle but significant shifts in the overall content and composition of camping, possibly even influencing the redefinition of camping's role in American life. Such change, however, will not take place without conscious intervention on the trends of camping that are at hand, which means recognizing and coping with the principal issues facing camps in these post-Bicentennial years.

CONCERNS AND ISSUES CONFRONTING CAMPING

To many practitioners of camps—directors and owners, both private and organizational--the issues confronting camping will probably not be the problem of purpose of planning for future needs, but will reflect the immediate concerns of institutional survival. Foremost among survival concerns will be the problem of camping's precarious economic base—of financing ongoing operations and funding necessary capital projects in an inflationary period, without jeopardizing basic services and unduly reducing the scope and population of camping's appeal. Another concern for camps, reported by many camp leaders, will be the issue of what are seen to be increasingly complex and demanding rules and guidelines of regulatory public agencies, and the implications of those rules on facilities, staffing, and budgets. A third survival issue will be the problem of meeting the greater and more enlightened expectations of participants, parents, and contributors, who will be evaluating camp experience as but one option in a growing array of public and private programs and activities competing for the time, money, and interests of a common constituency. With many camps the scene of threadbare program, obsolete facilities, and cramped sites set in the midst of congested resort environments, the issue will be a critical one. A fourth concern of survival, for many camp leaders, will be the issue of camping's image—whether it will be the picture of a "bug juice and kids' camp" culture, peripheral to the leisure interests and educational needs of contemporary youth and adults; or an inviting, lively setting and activity, that is both safe and health-giving, appropriate to the special circumstances of personal and social life in uncertain times.

To camping's public, the issues will not be those of camping's survival, but of its competence and relevance. Throughout the next 10 years, the public image of camps will be an even more unsettled one, easily tilted one way or another, toward popular acceptance or general disenchantment. As costs climb, more serious appraisals of camping will also increase, giving attention to the reliability of its stated values, to the appropriateness of its methods as an educational and recreational activity, to its stance on public issues and its demonstrations of diversity and democracy, to the health and safety of its human and physical environment, and to the competencies of its staff and management. Significantly, these appraisals of camp experience and outdoor program will probably not come from within the mainstream of camping—as has been the history of most camp evaluations, studies, and critiques—but from outside, from both critics and friends seeking to better understand, analyze, and interpret this special American invention. What this more critical look at camping is likely to find, beneath the immediate problems of institutional survival, competency, and public image, is that the fundamental issues of camps are those that mirror the larger problems of society; and that camping's durability through the next several generations is going to have much to do with its capabilities in recognizing and coping with these deeper, interrelated concerns. These are likely to include the following:

1. **The question of purpose.** In a society which appears to be drifting without meaning or direction, institutions, too, seem to be aimless and without purpose, save that of perpetuating themselves. Thus for many camps, institutional survival—keeping enrollments up, satisfying users and donors; holding budgets down; and holding buildings together—becomes the program's most compelling objective. The community of camps, with all of its history of educational intentions, becomes a collection of motels and rustic inns, raising questions of marketability and management, but not the issues of why, in the first place, a camp is here at all, in the late twentieth century.

These have been, and will continue to be, bleak times for the encouragement of encompassing social visions, or to fathom any sense or meaning out of the events of society and its institutions. But this is exactly the proper task for camps. One of the underlying currents of outpost history, it has been seen, is

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

camping's concern for a more humanized society, and the desire to express that concern through the creation and acting out of new human communities—miniatures of the society from which its constituencies are drawn—that give emphasis, most of all, to the quality of the relations of people with each other and with their environment. Camping needs to seek out, once again, those currents of social concern, hidden as they may be beneath all of its institutional problems and paraphernalia of fads and fashions that describe much of its contemporary career. And the arena for such a search is not the realm of rhetoric and sentiment, where too many current expressions of purpose seem to lie, but in the living, day-to-day experiences of camp itself. That means that the best path to take in camping's exploration of renewed social purpose is the one that leads to its full engagement with some of the basic issues of society—racism, environment, health, diversity, work, technology, community participation—within and through the actual content and structure of camping. This, of course, is not a well-marked path to enter upon for any educational institution, especially for camps with their designed detachment and flights into play-worlds and forest adventures.

2. **Escape from society or vision of a new community?** The problem seems to be that camping has tended more toward providing a diversion or retreat from the issues of contemporary society and much less toward contributing to the solution of social ills. Like the old-time welfare camps and fresh-air outings of Protestant urban philanthropy, a primary role of camps has become one of making life more bearable and tolerable, not to foster social change, or even to involve themselves with problems. As society has become more depersonalized and absorbed by its own technology, people have increasingly looked for meaning and purpose in their lives in accelerated, temporary group and personal experiences outside of society's institutional structures. Expressions of this tendency have included encounter groups and other communal experiences, which have had an important influence on camping during the last 10 years, and self-awareness and self-enhancement activities, which have also had an impact on camps, as witness the increase in specialized camps and programs, and the emphasis on personal skills, risk-taking activity, solo experience, acclimatization, and so on. As group and personal awareness activities increase in importance, one can project, in fact, camping eventually functioning almost entirely as a kind of detached safety valve for persons totally encompassed by the predictable, homogeneous, and impersonal environments of computerized society. It is true that camping needs to provide sanctuaries in which people can more fully realize the rich and complex dimensions of personal experience, but it also needs to find ways of connecting camp experience with the real world, fostering an awareness of the social and cultural predicament of persons in highly organized society and providing resources for people to participate in change.

3. **An exclusive or inclusive constituency?** The most effective way for camping to become a resource for change is for camps and centers themselves to become demonstrations of social rebuilding; to explore—even in the post-utopian climate of the present age—elements of a new society. Probably the most important step to take in this direction is to work toward greater inclusiveness in camping—in individual camps and outdoor programs, in camping and center leadership, in the associations and convocations of camping people, in the literature of camps, and in the envisioning of camp and program planners. There is much in camping that is designed for exclusiveness—its isolated, detached settings; its gatekeeping procedures and requirements; its specialized traditions, customs, and activities; and, certainly, its popular image as the province of the white leisure class. The problem is a severe one and will not disappear with the notion, too frequently heard, that camping's homogeneous populations are the result, not of camping's exclusiveness, but of taste—namely, that white Americans dominate the camping scene because they appear to be more inclined to nature recreation and appreciation than are minorities, poor people, and others with limited access to camps. The priority issue is that of involving minorities fully in program development, leadership, and participation—a concern that has never been taken too seriously by camping people, and that, of late, has even been dismissed further from the agendas of camp leadership. Other elements of camping's exclusiveness to be acted upon are the involvement of working class participants and leaders; the fostering of multi-age groupings; and the integration of handicapped persons in camping groups and activities.

Like other basic issues facing the future of camps, the resolution of camping's exclusiveness will not simply happen through a natural process of institutional evolution. Indeed, it will not take place at all without the strong will, energy, and hard work of a broad sector of the camping community engaged in the creation and building of lively, inclusive camp settings over a span of many years. And if it does not happen—which appears to be the present trend—organized camping can only be further diminished and ultimately removed altogether from any social and educational relevance in American life.

4. **Diversity**. Not unrelated to the problem of camping's exclusiveness and social and cultural homogeneity, is the question of its capacity to nurture and maintain a rich range of difference within its community of camps and outdoor programs, as well as within its various individual settings. The issue here is of camping's diversity, which, like that of the larger society, is continually threatened by those forces in contemporary culture that press institutions and people toward standardization and homogeneity. The problem is not that of the freedom of camping versus government regulation, as some camp people have suggested; but of diversity, individuality, and spontaneity versus conformity and routinization within the life of camps and camping itself. Just as the urge toward conformity and adaptation to institutional norms is especially strong in individual camp settings, so is the urge to conformity and standardization strong in camping's larger organizational apparatus—its associations, literature, architectural and planning services, training programs, equipment suppliers, and so on.

In seeking to create a more humanized environment, camping's concern—at every level of its activity—must be to enhance and sustain human difference and individuality, both as it seeks inclusiveness in its constituencies, and as it resists its temptations to conformity. The history of camping describes an extremely wide range of camp program settings and approaches that is probably unparalleled in any other educational institution. But organized camping's history also relates of the constant whittling down of programs to more common denominators of recognition, form, and purpose, to the degree that difference—in terms of camp sites, facilities, program structure and staffing, activities, equipment, camp

songs and tales, camp food, and even camp names—tends to be virtually nonexistent. As a response to camping's conforming inclinations, probably the most significant aspect of recent camp development has been the tendency toward diversification that has been evident both in the creation of more specialized settings and in the growth of highly individualized, multi-purpose outdoor centers. These developments relate to the widely varied range and complexity of educational outposts that at one time or another filled camping's history. But they also may yet relate to the warnings of that same history, of the drive toward conformity and a loss of the freedom and flexibility that tend to decline as the respect for difference diminishes.

There tend to be few situations today in which camp people are in substantial dialogue with one another.

5. **Flexibility and the fear of change**. As beginning steps in organized camping's renewal of social purpose, both the deliberate moves it takes toward creating more inclusive camp communities, and the efforts it makes to enhance and maintain diversity, will be dependent on camping's openness and capacity for change—yet another of the more basic issues confronting camps. Flexibility in this tradition-burdened institution will not come easy, in spite of its unique freedom from many of the restraints known to other educational settings. There are many reasons for this: the generally conservative character of camping's established constituency; the fact that camping and its programs tend to be fixed to fairly inflexible facilities and activity sites; the fear of risk during a period of uncertainty; the prevalence of "old campers" in the ranks of camping leadership—i.e., leaders who have literally grown up with camps and camping culture; lack of resources that are felt to be needed to implement change; lack of familiarity with options; detachment from public issues and public scrutiny; and, not least, a lack of commitment to change on the part of camping's leadership and supporters. For most camps, simply to survive will be dependent on how such an inventory of cautions, hesitations, and doubts is challenged and answered. The question of camping's flexibility is not a complicated one; but to seek its answers, to risk change, to experiment, to loosen up enough to move out of long-held isolation and well protected defenses, will be a major undertaking, whether to meet survival needs or to come up with a new definition of purpose.

6. **Isolation**. The final issue and one that seems fundamental to the others, is the problem of camping's isolation. Not only do camps tend to be isolated and detached from the social events and problems of American life, they also tend to be removed from the thinking, planning, and doing of kindred institutions—even other programs in the field of camping. Many camps have tended to function as if they were alone in the realm of camps and outposts, with little familiarity with their own antecedents in camping history, or of related ventures taking place just beyond their own territorial preserves. What Charles Hendry said forty years ago, introducing the importance of camping's role in community social planning, when he was conducting the Camp Institutes at George Williams College, is as true as ever:

> "Camping . . . has been a law unto itself. In few areas have the privileges of our laissez-faire economy been more freely enjoyed. With noteworthy exceptions camping in its traditional pattern of expansion and activity has demonstrated itself to be an individualistic enterprise, functioning essentially along competitive lines. As a consequence we have no guarantee that camping resources are distributed in terms of discovered needs, and we have no guarantee either that camps most worthy of survival are surviving. Social planning in terms of the camping needs of whole communities obviously has been largely crowded out of the picture. Such has not been the fashion in our American economy. In private camping, as in private business, in organization camping as among character-building agencies, competition, rugged and ragged, has been an embarassing element."

For a time during the 1930s and 1940s, a cluster of camping leaders, mainly from the Midwest and strongly committed to camping's current of social purpose, spoke strongly on behalf of camping's role in community planning as an alternative to the style of self-made camps described by Hendry. For a decade, even two, camps did contribute significantly to social planning endeavors in some cities; and today, there are instances of camp inclusions in the overviews of social planning, surveys and inventories, and examples of cooperative camp planning. But generally, there tend to be few situations today in which camp people are in substantial dialogue with one another; or where the rich diversity of outdoor programs—camps, environmental education activity, wilderness programs, retreat centers, folk schools, and so on—meets in an exchange of mutual concerns and programs; or where camp people are in continuing contact and interaction with educators, historians, nutritionists, artists, anthropologists, and others whose disciplines intersect with the concerns of camp.

Even camp staffs tend to be isolated from their counterparts in other camps, although much could be gained by the occasional exploration and sharing of mutual concerns, problems, and ideas—not in off-season detachment, but in the midst of active camp seasons. Many camps, too, tend to be isolated from their own local and regional environments, including even the concerns and needs of their immediate neighborhoods, yet could be finding new roles for themselves by entering into more serious dialogue with local communities.

In part, as Hendry suggested, camping's isolation is in character with the legendary independence and self-sufficient style of American business and social institutions. In part, also, it is a quality of a fragmented, technological society, where illusions of human dialogue and exchange—on television and radio and in public events such as conventions and formal meetings—tend to replace the realities of face to face interaction. But it also has to do with camping's fear of change; its reluctance to reach out to more inclusive constituencies; its tendency toward conformity; its hesitation in becoming involved with the events and issues of society. With all of its sources and connections, camping's isolation has to be a critical concern, especially in seeing how the encompassing

character of camp experience, together with its breadth of freedom and informality, offers such an unusual occasion for the fostering of ties, interrelationships, and dialogue, that could contribute much to camping's relevance, flexibility, and diversity. One beginning, and hardly a threatening one, might simply be opening itself to some of its own past, at least to that portion of its history that describes camping's discontent with mere self-sufficiency and its sporadic search for social purpose.

THE FUTURE OF CAMPING AND THE CHALLENGE OF ITS PAST

Like the problem of camping's detachment from society, set against its concern for outreach into social ills, the history of camps in American life has been interwoven with two traditionally contrasting images of the relations of people with one another and the earth. One is the cooperative band of people coming together to fashion a common social destiny in a new environment, the other, the image of the solitary explorer, hunter, or dreamer in the American wilds. On the one hand it is the example of camp meetings, frontier settlements, utopian communities, and tribal encampments; on the other, the legends of mountain-men trappers, lone voyageurs, and lonely seekers. The conflicts and occasional confluences of these traditional dichotomies—of relationship and solitude, responsibility and privacy, homecoming and the outward, personal journey—have been described in many ways in American literature and popular culture. But the paradox of the inclinations of many Americans toward both solitude and community in their search for alternatives to day-to-day experience has also been given expression in American institution-building and social invention, most especially in its organized camps and outdoor program centers.

Drawing from roots lying deep in the histories of communal encampments in the hinterlands and retreats of solitary hunters and visionaries, organized camps and outposts found their season of first growth and early flowering in the Centennial years of United States history. The time was a fertile one for the nourishment of such new educational settings as the out-of-doors afforded, and the late 1870s—while experiencing only a foreshadowing of the later back-to-nature movement—saw a bounty of experimentation in forms and means of outdoor education. Back-country colonies for field study in the natural sciences, lakeshore and oceanside Protestant summer assemblies, encampments of teachers, traveling schools and classrooms, retreats for working women, farming and seafaring sojourns for dependent and delinquent youth, and fresh-air programs for city children—all shared in common a design of taking people, for a few days or weeks, out of the commonplace life of cities, work, and schooling, into a new community set in the midst of nature. Witnessing to a kinship with the sources of the backwoods utopias of nineteenth-century America and the solitary camps of wilderness pilgrims, the early outposts in nature also shared in a search for another course than that marked by the prevailing customs and conventions of urban life and institutions. For the most part, however, their beginnings—like the rural intentional communities and isolated hunters' camps of the same era—lay hidden beneath the more conspicuous flourishing of the technological innovations and achievements of America's Gilded Age and were overshadowed by the events of a transitional period of history that would be remembered for its political compromise and corruption, its precarious economy, and its social and environmental violence, but not for the happy woodland retreats of the 1870s.

Today, while America's outposts of lake and forest learning and recreation have multiplied far beyond the notions of their original makers, they are still but partially known and explored features of the nation's educational enterprise—half hidden in the vacation landscapes of islands, lakesides, river groves, and mountain clearings—beyond the main roads of a society overgrown with technology and affluence. And the social task of camps, for the new century that lies ahead, is probably not much different than that of the Centennial era camps: to seek and sustain alternatives in community and vision; to reveal the connections of past and present; to support the linkages of cities and nature; to safeguard the diversity and humanity of life; and open passages to a renewal of purposes and responsibilities, for men and women and their institutions. At their best, this is what camps are about—in seasons of uncertainty as well as in good times. In the late 1970s, as in the century before, the sources of camps still lie with the dreams of a new world and the search for fully-lived human destinies within that world. Such sources say nothing of the specific course that camping will need to take, in its renewal of social purpose at the beginning of its second century. But the sources do indicate a precedent for the necessity of making departures, as well as a reminder of a heritage of social conscience to celebrate in the campfire memories of its centenary.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Note: The search of camps and other outdoor centers and programs for social purpose has produced a large and extremely rich and varied literature. The following selection is meant only to be suggestive of the scope of this dimension of outpost history.)

Adams, Frank. *Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander*. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1975.

Bray, Frank Chapin. "Social and Ethical Ideals in Summer Assemblies." *The Chautauquan* 47 (July, 1907), pp. 171-177.

Camping Magazine (February, 1942). Special issue on camping's role in society.

Dean, Arthur D. *Our Schools in War Time—and After*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1918.

Dimock, Hedley S. "The Summer Camp Today and Tomorrow." *Survey Midmonthly* 80 (May, 1944), pp. 147-149.

Graham, Abbie. *The Girls' Camp: Program-Making for Summer Leisure*. New York: The Womans Press, 1933.

Henderson, C. Hanford. *What Is It To Be Educated?* Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914.

Kelly, Francis J. and Daniel J. Baker. *Outward Bound Schools as an Alternative to Institutionalization for Adolescent Delinquent Boys*. Outward Bound, Inc., 1968.

Liebermann, Joshua. *Creative Camping*. New York: Association Press, 1931.

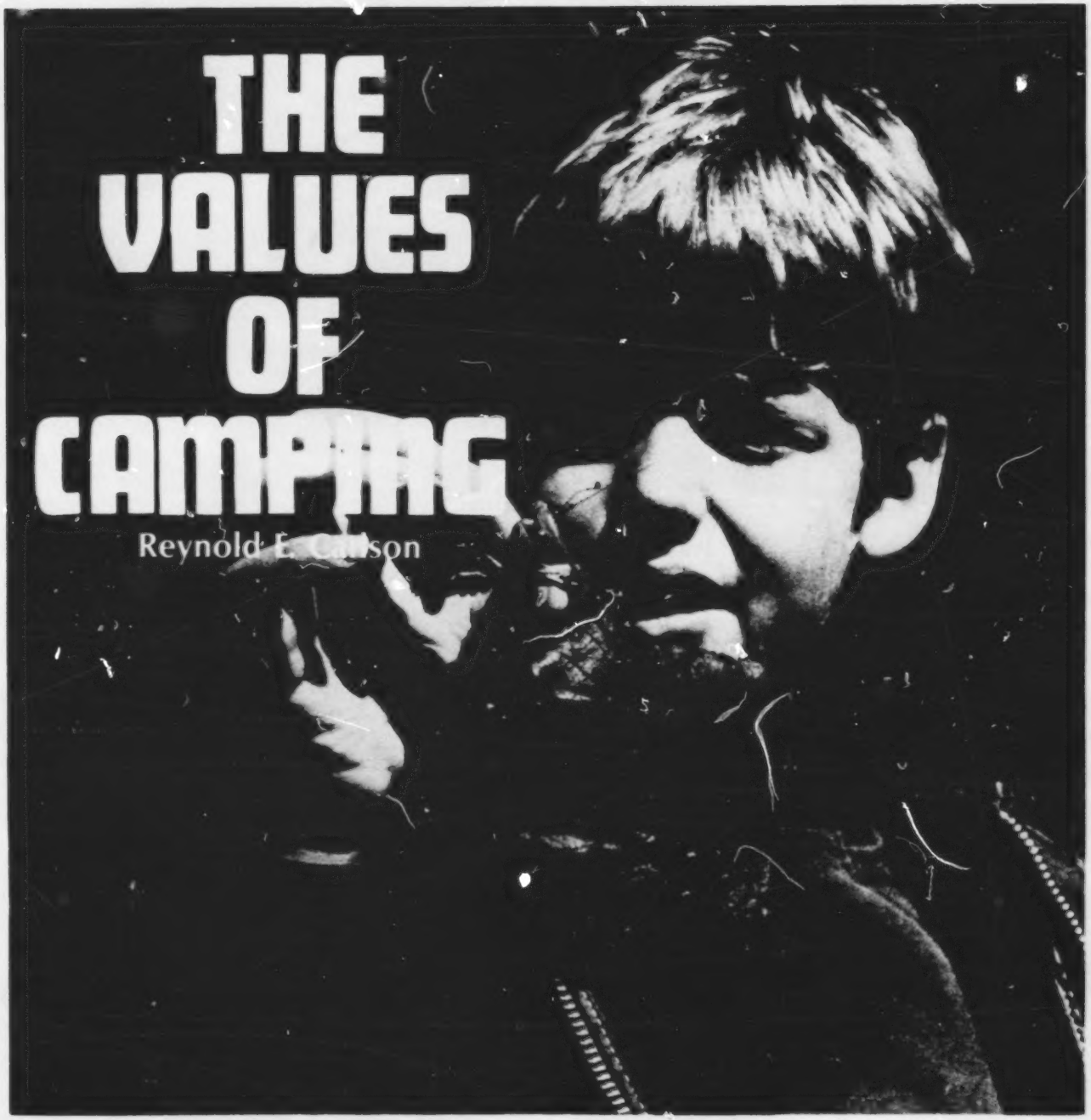
Loughmiller, Campbell. *Wilderness Road*. Austin: The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, 1965.

Mason, Bernard S. *Camping and Education*. New York: The McCall Company, 1930.

Salmond, John A. *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1967.

Sharp, L.B. "Basic Considerations in Outdoor and Camping Education." *The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals* 31 (May, 1947) pp. 43-47.

Webb, Kenneth. *As Sparks Fly Upward: The Rationale of the Farm and Wilderness Camps*. Canaan: Phoenix Publishing, 1973.



The Values of Camping is a monograph produced by the Fund for Advancement of Camping in 1975. It was written by Dr. Reynold E. Carlson, professor emeritus of recreation at Indiana University. It is available through the ACA bookstore.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE